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USDA Celebrates Partnership with Native Americans in Wisconsin - \$1.3 Million to Improve Housing In Five Tribal Communities Nationwide

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development State Director, Stan Gruszynski today highlighted USDA's active partnership with Native American tribes in Wisconsin.

"I am proud to highlight USDA's work to support Native American communities," Gruszynski said. "USDA offers a variety of housing and community facilities programs to help address some of the education and health care needs of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and for Native Americans elsewhere in the nation."

Gruszynski visited the campus of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Tribal Community College in Hayward to tour the Sustainable Agriculture Research Station. In September, the College received a \$168,000 USDA Tribal College Initiative Grant to expand the Station. The improvements will provide better post-harvest handling of produce and add a commercial/educational kitchen for community use. The Station trains students and other community members in sustainable agricultural practices that improve access to healthy, nutritious food.

During his visit here today, Gruszynski also met with the Tribal Chairman Michael J. Isham, Jr. and leaders of the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe to discuss the community's needs and their plans to address them. Chairman Isham commented, "The Tribes and USDA are a good example of how a Federal or State agency should work together. Through multiple USDA/Tribal consultations the agency developed a good understanding of tribal issues and priorities. These grants will help meet these priorities."

Gruszynski notified the Lac Courte Oreilles Housing Authority that USDA is awarding it a \$289,000 Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance grant to help strengthen its capacity to provide affordable housing opportunities. Gruszynski signed a certificate recognizing the Authority's efforts on the community's behalf.

The Housing Authority will use its Mutual Self-Help grant to help tribal members build 10 homes over the next two years. The Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians is the first federally recognized Tribe in Wisconsin to receive a USDA Self-Help grant.

Under the Self-Help program, participants provide at least 65 percent of the construction labor on each other's homes, with technical assistance from the organization overseeing the project. This reduces the total cost of buying a home, allowing many people to own houses that otherwise would have been out of reach. If interested in participating in the program please contact LCO Housing Authority at 715-634-2147.

Nationally four other federally recognized Tribes are receiving funding through USDA's Mutual Self-Help program. The recipients are:

- **New Mexico:** Zuni Housing Authority – \$279,000 grant to assist 12 low-income families of the Zuni Tribe build homes in McKinley County
- **North Carolina:** North Carolina Indian Housing Authority – \$204,000 grant to provide technical assistance to the Lumbee

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and Tuscarora Tribes to build eight homes in Cumberland, Robeson and Hoke counties over two years

- **South Dakota:** Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation – \$300,000 grant to serve western South Dakota and the Lakota's of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Twelve homes will be built over a two-year period.
- **Washington:** Spokane Indian Housing Authority – \$292,000 grant to provide technical and supervisory assistance to the Spokane Indian Tribe in Stevens County. Community members plan to build 11 homes.

Funding of each award announced today is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the grant agreement.

Since the start of the Obama Administration, USDA has provided \$3.4 million for 13 self-help grants that have helped build nearly 200 homes in tribal communities.

Today's event in Wisconsin is another example of how USDA is celebrating National Native American Heritage Month this November. USDA is proud of its support of Tribal Nations and its work throughout Indian Country and Alaska.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As the lead federal agency for rural development needs, USDA Rural Development can help rural communities and regions grow and prosper by offering a variety of financial and technical assistance programs that encourage the development of strong community and economic development strategies.

During this past year, USDA Rural Development's \$571 million investment in Wisconsin helped create or retain nearly 1,380 jobs, aided 3,600 families in buying their own homes and assisted more than 50 communities as they made improvements to their facilities, services and infrastructure.

Further information on USDA Rural Development is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the web site at www.rd.usda.gov/wi.

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